Introduction to Performance Studies
A. Vazquez
PERF 101.001 (15700) – Tuesdays, 11:00am to 12:45am EST
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Distance Learning/Synchronous

Recitation Sections
- PERF-UT 101.002 (15829) – Thursdays, 10:00am – 11:15am, Distance Learning/Synchronous, Y. Stern
- PERF-UT 101.003 (15830) – Thursdays, 10:00am – 11:15am, Distance Learning/Synchronous, L. Girino
- PERF-UT 101.004 (16102) – Thursdays, 10:00am – 11:15am, Distance Learning/Synchronous, A. Katsof

To enter the field of Performance Studies is to proceed with a willingness to forgo strict definitions of art “objects” and “events.” The field encourages engagement with the enactments of everyday life, things inside and outside formal cultural institutions, and an expansive notion of performance space to reflect on how “objects” and “events” impact our sense of the world. While the question, “what is performance?” has mystified the minds of many, this course will move beyond this question by investigating: what does performance do? And how does performance help us to understand contemporary questions about aesthetics, politics, and the social world? To enter into the question “what does performance do?” is to open the line between theory and practice; a line that falsely separates “performer” from “critic.” In addition to deepening an understanding of the field of Performance Studies, students will read texts that vitalize critical thinking in all curricular areas of the arts and sciences. The course will engage theories of the field as they emerge from performances themselves, especially from the robust creative repertoires of New York City.

Performance Theory
S. Richter
PERF-UT 102.001 (15787) – Thursdays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm EST
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Distance Learning/Synchronous

In this introduction to Performance Theory, we will take a dual approach. On one hand, we will study key events in dance, theater, visual art, political action, and music to trace the development of performance art over time. On the other hand, we will study the difficulty of historicizing, contextualizing, and theorizing the so-called live arts, particularly when debates in “presence” and “liveness” come to define performance studies as a discipline. This course will review critical debates in performance studies around embodiment, subjectification, and ephemerality while also renewing performance as historiographic practice. Foregrounding black, queer, and feminist perspectives, combined with discipline-specific conversations in dance, theater, and visual art, we will ask both about the foundations of dominant history and the possibility of unorthodox counter-narratives using performance art and theory. Why is performance as medium or genre of art-making a
mode of critical inquiry, and how can writing about and theorizing with performance help us live beyond the demands of the present?

**Performance of Everyday Life**

B. Browning  
PERF-UT 206.001 (22264) – Tuesdays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm EST  
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Distance Learning/Synchronous  

*Majors-only & limited seats. Please contact Laura Fortes at lf65@nyu.edu to register.*

This course focuses on “everyday” versions of performance (as opposed to theatrical or formal performances). Drawing from anthropology, affect studies, sociology, psychoanalytic and queer theory, the course invites students to view seemingly non-theatrical social interaction as performance, and to consider the significance of the seemingly “normal” and inconsequential nature of such performances. What happens when what is “second nature” becomes the focus of our attention? The course will also place particular emphasis on writing as a mode of illuminating and interrogating the “everyday,” as well as considering it as performance practice in and of itself.

**Theories of Movement**

A. Hafez  
PERF-UT 303.001 (18644) – Wednesdays, 12:30pm to 3:15pm EST  
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Distance Learning/Synchronous  

This course is centralized around seminal texts that have shaped movement and dance theory fields, as they intersect with and inform us about political, social and economic realities. The course explores the rich history of experimental dance and movement-based performance, and the possibility of a movement-based analysis of performativity, thus taking performance studies towards a terrain of physical doing and questioning, rather than linguistic theories or text-based accounts that have shaped performance studies.

While the course will orbit around the history of where we are, New York City’s rich dance and performance terrains, it will also travel the unbeaten path outside of the western hemispheric paradigm. By looking at nascent theories of movement from artists in exile, revisiting dance histories on the Palestinian/Israeli borders, assessing nationalist discourses in postcolonial Egyptian and North African Dance, looking at the relation of trauma to choreography through contemporary Japanese Butoh, and Zar dances from outskirts of Ethiopian, Iranian and Egyptian villages as choreographies of possession and resistance. Students will be able to develop a fundamental understanding of the relation between movement and theories on performance, as well as develop cross-cultural and trans-historical vectors of reading contemporary movement and performance phenomena today.

**Topics in Performance Studies: Neoliberalism & Performance**

A. Lepecki  
PERF-UT 305.001 (15915) – Wednesdays, 9:30am to 12:15pm EST  
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Distance Learning/Synchronous  

*Majors-only & limited seats. Please contact Laura Fortes at lf65@nyu.edu to register.*

In the early 2000s, Jon McKenzie identified how “performance” could be seen as operating at two simultaneous and parallel levels: on one hand, as an artistic practice of resistance, related to experimentation and orientated towards ongoing critiques of power; on the other hand, as an order-word expressing the single most important imperative uttered by capitalist power itself: its demand for the subject to constantly perform or else be rendered useless. Two decades after McKenzie’s diagnosis, we can see how the ongoing production of a relentless *performing* subjectivity has become a central feature of what political theorist Wendy Brown has recently called neoliberalism’s “stealth revolution.” This seminar will examine, interrogate, and critique the ways the concept and practices of “performance” is infused with this double nature: as resistant line of flight as well as neoliberalism’s life-line. Through series of close readings drawing heavily from political theory (Wendy Brown, Maurizio Lazzarato, David Harvey, Deleuze and Guattari), critical theory (Teresa Brennan, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney), speculative pragmatism (Brian Massumi, Patricia Clough) and performance and dance studies (Shannon Jackson, Randy Martin, Claire Bishop), we will examine the ways neoliberalism is much more than yet
another economic doctrine but a modality of performance that aims at permeating molecularly the very basis of desire and of subject-formation. We will also look at ways performance (performance art, theater, dance, music, etc.) has worked to map neoliberalism's insidious colonization of life and living, and has created acts of significant critical and political resistance against neoliberalism's many fronts. We will look in particular at ways neo-liberalism creates a condition of permanent self-assessment, and therefore turns individuals into apparatuses of self-monitoring. We will work simultaneously in two approaches: heavy theoretical analysis (note, there will be a high volume of readings); and practical development of performative actions of resistance (note, we will aim at creating actions, not just interpreting them).

**Topics in Performance Studies: Theater & Performance: Mise-en-scène**

M. Casteñeda

PERF-UT 305.002 (22265) – Mondays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm EST

4 pts – 721 Broadway, Distance Learning/Synchronous

Majors-only & limited seats. Please contact Laura Fortes at lf65@nyu.edu to register.

*Mise-en-scène* (from the French: placed on stage) is the term used in theatrical and cinematic contexts to refer to the elements of what is visible to the spectator – whether through the frame of a proscenium stage or the cinematic lens. That frame, the set, costumes, and lighting, and the blocking of performers all potentially contribute as much to our perception of the performance as any speech acts involved in it. Of course, not only theatrical and cinematic performances are framed and staged. How do the elements of staging and framing affect our perceptions of court cases, presidential debates, or live-feed videos on social media? This course will ask students to consider ways in which various performances are set on stage for them, the ways in which they are placed and framed in those performances, and the ways in which they frame and stage their own performances.